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ABSTRACT

This study presents direct observation of a 7-year-old, native Spanish-speaking female learning English in a mainstreamed first and second split classroom. Subject is described in the school setting, and it is shown how she worked, what she did during the mornings, how she responded to commands and directions, and how and with whom she communicated and socialized. The premise was that the subject's use of language with other Spanish-speaking children influenced her learning and that she relied on and used different techniques, such as code-switching, to communicate and make herself understood. Findings illustrate how the subject learned a second language as a secondary action while engaged in primary classroom learning activities other than formal language instruction. It was found that the degree of proficiency that the subject reached correlated with the English language that was used exclusively at the school setting and was mainly context specific; the help and assistance of a close friend; and the one-on-one assistance received for half an hour every day to help her develop her language skills. Socialization played a major role in the acquisition of the second language. (Contains 27 references.) (NAV)

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# LANGUAGE LEARNING, LITERACY AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND: SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN A MAINSTREAMED CLASSROOM.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study presents the case of a 7 year old girl in a mainstreamed first and second split classroom. She was learning how to read and write in English while enrolled in the Literacy Assistant Program at the school. The study shows how she learned a second language as a secondary action while she was engaged in primary classroom learning activities other than formal language instruction.

The premise of the study was that the child's use of language with other Spanish speaking children influenced her learning, and that she relied on and used different techniques, such as code-switching, to communicate and to make herself understood. I will focus on the influence of social exchange and peer relations when achieving informal instruction in a second language.

The study presents the child in the school setting, shows how she worked, what she did during those mornings at the school, how she responded to commands and directions and how and with whom she communicated and socialized. I will show that the degree of proficiency the girl reached correlated with three factors: a) the English language that was used exclusively at the school setting and was mainly context specific, b) the help and assistance she received from her closest friend, and c) the one-on-one assistance that she received for half an hour every day in helping her to develop those skills.

The study was based on direct observation in a combined first/second grade classroom at Ivan K. Pravda Elementary School located in a large metropolitan city in the Southwest. There were 27 students in the class: 20 boys and 7 girls, 12 first graders and 15 second graders. The teacher was a Euro-American woman who had a Masters Degree in ESL and ten years of experience as an elementary school teacher. She started working in this class after the winter vacation because she had recently returned from Australia on a teacher exchange program. When she came back the teacher who was replacing her returned to Australia. There was a teacher's aid helping in the classroom two and a half hours every day; a female mono-English speaker. The class' minority population was represented by 6 Hispanic and 3 black students.

The Literacy Assistance Program took place in the classroom from 9:30 to 10:00 every morning. Four students (all Spanish speakers) participated and received personalized reading and writing instruction in English with a special teacher (American, female).

The source of data for this study was approximately 25 hours of observation conducted primarily in the classroom, in the library and at the school playground. The researcher was basically a participant observer. Only a few times did the teacher ask her to help out with classroom procedures such as passing out papers. Casual conversations with the teacher and with some of the students occurred throughout the observation period. Field notes were taken during observations and were summarized in a field book each week. During the last four weeks of the study, parts of the observations were videotaped.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of a bilingual immersion classroom is to teach in the second language and not the teaching OF the second language. (Romney et al., 1988). It is supposed to be a "natural" way of learning a language within the school environment. Outside the province of Quebec in Canada, French is learned almost entirely in the context of school subjects and other areas related to academic activities. Everyday life takes place entirely in English (Connors et al., 1978), and immersion children have no opportunity to broaden their vocabulary in French. This means that the majority of immersion children are not able to function adequately in a French speaking daily environment.

A classroom processes study discovered that differences in achievement levels in French are of considerable significance in the immersion classroom (Netten & Spain, 1989). They found that different processes were in evidence in different classrooms, and that these different processes brought about different results in students. Teachers organized and instructed their classes differently, although they followed a similar curriculum. These differences were important in the student's learning outcomes.

"Language learning is much more clearly a goal of instruction in some classrooms than in others" (Netten & Spain, 1989, pp. 499). All people in an immersion classroom do not have equal opportunity to learn a second language as they are learning the subject matter. As the authors pointed out, it was likely that students in a classroom where there was a richer language environment learned the second language better. Important factors were more communicative exchanges that have meaning for the students and more language interactions. Some students within a classroom had more occasions to develop language than others. This study attempted to show that opportunities to learn a second language were not equal for low or high achievers, or for students who have a high or low level of proficiency in the second language. As a result of this assumption by Netten and Spain (1989), there were students who found themselves in different learning environments despite the fact that they were in the same classroom.

There are essentially three different ways to organize Bilingual Education (Krashen, 1982).

1) Submersion Programs: NEP (non-English proficient) children are placed in the same classroom with native English speakers and the regular curriculum is followed. There is no organized special instruction or extra help for these children.

2) Submersion + ESL programs: NEP children are given a separate English as a second language class for some prescribed period of time usually one hour daily. The rest of the day is spent in class with native English speakers.

3) Immersion: Refers to programs in which subject matter is taught in a second language to the majority of children. For example, English speaking children in the United States and Canada are instructed in French. This need not always be the case since immersion programs are possible for majority children as well. Immersion research is a rich source of information about second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982).

Language acquisition is a subconscious process in the sense that people are often not aware that they are acquiring a language while they are doing so (Cummins, 1989; Krashen, 1982). Language

learning, on the other hand, is knowing about language or formal knowledge of a language. "Acquisition is picking up a language, while ordinary equivalents for learning include grammar and rules" (Krashen, 1982a, pp. 56).

Second language theorists (e.g. Krashen, 1981; 1982b; Wong Fillmore, 1983; Cummins, 1989) agree that acquisition of a second language depends not only on the exposure to the language, but also on the access to "second language input" that is modified to make it comprehensible. Krashen argues that comprehensible input is the obvious fact that a central function of language use is meaningful communication. One important link between the interdependence principle and the notion of comprehensible input is that knowledge acquired through linguistic interaction in one language plays an important role in the understanding (comprehensible input) in the other language (Cummins, 1984, Krashen ,1981).

The Natural Approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983), is based on the idea that language is best taught when it is being used to transmit messages and not when it is used for learning purposes. Researchers point out that there are major points to consider in the natural approach method. First, certain affective variables are related to second language achievement. Usually performers with certain types of motivations and with good self images do better in second language acquisition. Second, the best situations for language development seem to be those that encourage lower anxiety levels. Third, it is important to stress the idea of language aptitude. Some individuals have a special aptitude for second language learning and this can be reflected in their development of the second language learning, but not in the acquisition (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

The role of the first language is very important especially in the process of transference from one language to the other, and in making input comprehensible to facilitate communication. One obvious advantage is that the use of the first language allows performers to show their competence and to meet a practical need of communication before they have acquired a relevant level in the new language (Moll & Diaz, 1993). Another advantage is that the use of the first language allows the performer to participate more in conversation. This could mean more comprehensible input and more second language acquisition ( Krashen & Terrell, 1983) It is important to note that at this point the individual variation (Terrell, 1982) will affect the rate and extent of acquisition. This can be due to the amount of comprehensible input the student obtains, the strength of the affective filter and the personal characteristics of the acquirer.

A considerable amount of research suggests that minority students frequently develop fluent surface or conversational skills in the school language, but their academic skills continue to get behind grade norms (Cummins, 1984, 1989). At this point it is important to distinguish between children's abilities to function conversationally in English from their ability to manipulate language without the support provided in an interpersonal communicative context. The distinction between the conversational and academic aspects of language proficiency carries important implications for the education of language

minority students. Academic skills in English usually require all the elementary school years to develop and are dependent on children's conversational skills (Cummins, 1989).

As was mention before, very different time periods are required for minority students to achieve peer levels of fluency in conversational skills in the second language as compared to academic skills. Conversational skills often approach native-like levels in about two years of exposure to English. A period of five years or more is required for minority students to achieve at the level of native students in academic aspects of language proficiency (Cummins, 1981, 1984; Krashen, 1982b; Wong Fillmore, 1983).

In a study of a Ukrainian bilingual program, first and third grade children who used Ukrainian consistently in the home where better able to detect ambiguities in English sentence structure (Cummins & Mulcahy, 1978). They showed that the use of a minority language in the home did not handicap children's academic progress. Whether English or a minority language was used at home was relatively unimportant for students' academic success. What was important was the quality of interaction the children experienced with the adults (Cummins, 1982).

Children whose home language is not English, are usually grouped together as children of Limited English Proficiency. Such a label supports the belief that these children are a group with similar needs and that they can be treated in a similar way. However, the differences among these children are many and have great significance for their education (Allen, 1986).

Wong Fillmore (1976), studied five Mexican children aged 5 to 7 year old, who where acquiring English in a bilingual school. She found great variations in the approaches these children used to learn the language and in the amount of English they acquired by the end of the year. The children who made the major progress were those who were strongly interested in socializing with their English speaking peers. It seemed that the children were better able to elicit more English language input.

In another study of an ESL class, seven different languages were spoken by the children who made up this group (Allen, 1986). Allen found that these children were able to communicate with little use of English by using language formulas, gestures and mime to socialize. The five students who were the highest achievers academically, made minimal use of English for social purposes. Three of the five used their native language to socialize. The other two rarely socialized with children in any language. It is not difficult to see that there is a wide range of differences in the way children learn a second language.

There are certain crucial factors that contribute to the learning of a second language (Macaulay, 1980). One of these is motivation; that is, the learner's motivation or lack of it will have a significant effect on his/her progress. Young children appeared to learn a second language easily in informal situations, and often failed to do that well in academic learning situations. This did not mean that children do not learn in the classrooms. But if that is their only contact with the language, then, their progress is going to be less than if they were playing with other children who spoke the language and were eager to communicate with them. In second language learning it is clear that the exposure to the language and the opportunity to use it are not enough to ensure learning. The degree of proficiency an individual

reaches will depend upon a number of different factors and features characteristic in the different settings.

Children do not learn all of their language from adults. They also learn a lot from children their age or a little older (Macaulay, 1980). For example, an opportunity for children to work together on a project gives them a reason for talking to each other. Cooperative learning techniques enhance academic achievement and particularly so for minority students (Cummins, 1989). Studies have shown that low-achieving and minority students appear to be considerably more motivated to learn in cooperative classrooms (Kagan, 1986; Slavin, 1983).

There is a number of other factors that have been mentioned by different investigators that influence the learning of a second language. Heath (1983) argues that differences between social classes in learning to read derives from more than access to literacy materials at home. It is very important how literacy activities are integrated with children's daily lives. Heath points out that students who achieve academic success bring to school different language uses (i.e., language to sustain and maintain interactions, language to describe objects, language to obtain information) and the cultural norms that are embedded in them. Minority children who have these functions of language in their first language can transfer them to the second language if they are given appropriate opportunities.

Mainstreamed children and children in immersion programs are at a serious disadvantage when it comes to reading books in their second language (Romney et al., 1988). Those books that they are capable of reading are written for younger native speakers, and the students get bored. At the same time, stories that interest them are too difficult for them to read. In their study with fourth graders they discovered that reading stories aloud to children for half an hour each school day for twelve weeks was clearly beneficial. The children improved in their vocabulary, in their free recall and in their ability to communicate or make themselves understood. "These findings can be explained, at least in part, on the basis of language process knowledge which is believed to develop through any intensive language engagement" (Romney et al., 1988; pp. 535).

Goodman and Goodman (1978) studied children from four different nationalities (Arabic, Navajo, Samoan and Spanish) as they read in English. They found that factors other than their first languages determined how well the children were able to read in English. All of the children, some with many limitations in English, were able to read and retell stories. Background knowledge was a significant factor in how well they read and recalled. The more these children knew about the content, the easier it was for them to read and understand the text.

One last important aspect of bilingualism to be considered is Code-Switching. That is, the use of more than one language by communicants in a speech act (Rong & Butler, 1989). Code-Switching primarily occurs when a bilingual person talks to another bilingual person. It is generally believed that Code-Switching is intentional. A bilingual speaker will code-switch in certain situations but not in others. The authors believe that social situations influence code-switching wherein an individual may switch from

one language to the other depending on the person to whom s/he is talking.

There are different patterns of code-switching present in Mexican-American communities (Falties, 1989). The use of each kind depends upon the relations between the speaker's functional knowledge of the two languages and the effect of conversational factors. People who are starting to learn a second language, are limited in the use of code-switching since they do not have enough skills in the second language to produce the kinds of constructions involved in the switching.

Investigators have noted several linguistic functions of code-switching, such as communicating feelings, making comparative statements, conveying humor and shifting topics (Wonder, 1987). It has been shown that code-switching has important social functions, and that it makes the communication more vivid to the bilingual listener by helping him or her to fully understand the speech (Mandler & Goodman, 1982).

**DATA**

Lucia, a 7 year old girl Mexican girl, started kindergarten and was in her third year at Ivan K. Pravda Elementary School. In first grade the following year she had a bilingual teacher who thought it would be better for her to repeat first grade because of her lack of English proficiency. Lucia could read and write in Spanish at that time, but she was able to do very little in English. At the time of the study she was repeating first grade again. In this combined first/second grade class she did not have the opportunity to use her Spanish literacy skills because her teacher was a monolingual English speaker. Lucia was slowly learning to communicate and to express herself in English. She was learning to talk, read and write in her second language.

Emilia, Lucia's closest friend, was a bilingual student. She was also 7 year old, but she was a second grader in this combined class. The two girls spent most of their time together. Emilia guided Lucia, helped her with her assignments, translated from English to Spanish for her, read to her in English and oriented her all the time. She was the one who generally decided what to do and how to do it. Lucia usually followed and imitated her friend. About 90% of the time they spoke Spanish and when necessary, Emilia translated for Lucia even if she did not request it.

Cooperative learning was one important pedagogical component of their classroom which allowed Lucia and Emilia to work together most of the time. Their desks were separated because there were activities that they had to do individually. During those activities Lucia had to really think by herself and accomplish tasks without using much Spanish. Sometimes she asked another bilingual student for help. They used different techniques such as code-switching to understand each other.

DAY ONE

10:32 - 10:58. Students were working on The Arizona Statehood Project. Some students worked individually and some in pairs or in small groups. Everybody was very involved and seemed to know what to do and where to get the necessary materials. Lucia and Emilia were working together. They did

exactly the same thing at the same time. Lucia had to wait for Emilia to finish coloring and then she said: "Ahora lo cortamos" (Now we cut it), and they did it together. Lucia observed Emilia constantly and in two opportunities she asked her if she was doing the right thing. At one point, Lucia needed a marker. Emilia told her to go and ask the teacher, but Lucia did not move, so Emilia went and got one for her. While working, they talked in Spanish, joking and laughing. One girl asked Lucia if she was done and she answered by nodding her head. Emilia and Lucia gave the teacher their finished projects.

11:00 - 11:20. Out on the playground they sat under a tree and ate cookies. Lucia had two and shared them with her friend. They sat there during the whole recess (20 minutes), talked and sang songs mainly in Spanish. Lucia sang a nursery rhyme in Spanish and when she finished, Emilia sang it in English. Then they repeated it together in both languages (Lucia repeated the English version after Emilia)

11:23 - 11:35. Back in the classroom, the teacher read a story. Lucia and Emilia sat together on the carpet. Lucia played with a little pencil and did not pay much attention to the story.

DAY TWO

8:33 - 8:55. It was silent reading time. The two girls were sitting together at one of the round tables in the back of the room. They were reading the same English print book (each of them had a copy). Emilia read aloud and Lucia tried to followed the words with her finger. Sometimes she glanced over at Emilia, watched where she was pointing with her finger and repeated with her friend a part that she had memorized. It was a sentence that appeared on every page, it had a special rhythm and it was always the last sentence of the page. In two opportunities, she interrupted the reading and asked Emilia " Que dice aqui?" (What does it say here?), and Emilia read the word in English.

They picked another story from the same book. It was one that they both wanted to read. Lucia closed her book and listened to the story. Emilia read by moving her finger along while Lucia watched the pictures on Emilia's book. Lucia did not understand a part of the story and asked her friend, in Spanish, what was really happening. Emilia explained to her using mostly words in Spanish and a few in English. There was a word that Emilia did not know how to say in Spanish and Lucia helped her with it. Emilia had to leave because her reading tutor was waiting for her. Lucia lined up with the other students to go to the library. She smiled to another Spanish speaking student. She was quiet and silent.

9:00 - 9:30. At the library Lucia sat on the floor with the rest of the group. She was attentive and listened to the stories, but she did not answer with her peers the questions the librarian asked about the story. When the students were checking out books, Lucia walked around, picked up three different books, looked at the pictures, but did not select any to take with her to the classroom.

9:35 - 10:00. Back in the classroom, the LAP (Literacy Assistance Project) instructor was waiting for them. Lucia and other three boys joined her at the round table in the back of the room. The instructor read three different stories in English to them (that at one point the children had asked for). When she finished, each of the students had to pick a book from a selection she had on a table and read it

aloud to her. Lucia read a preschool book without making any mistakes.

10:00 - 10:18. Emilia came back to the classroom when the teacher was asking the students to finish the projects that needed to be done by noon. As soon as Lucia was done with her reading, she joined Emilia at their desks. Although the desks were separated, they worked on the same project and shared the materials. Even though Lucia knew what to do, she asked Emilia what she was going to do first because she wanted to do the same thing. The teacher interrupted. Everybody had to line up. They went to the second grade classroom to watch a movie.

DAY THREE

8:35 - 8:55. During silent reading Lucia and Emilia listened to a story, written in English, on tape and followed along in the book. While Emilia listened to another story, Lucia took off the headphones and went to find another book. She looked at the pictures and made up a story in Spanish while following the writing with her finger. Suddenly Emilia interrupted her and showed her a picture from the book she was reading. They both looked at it and talked about it in Spanish. After that, they read silently different books until the teacher asked everybody to put the books away.

9:00 - 9:30. At the library, they were on the floor and the librarian was checking who had brought their books back. When he said "Lucia", she looked at him. He asked: "Is your book at home?" she gestured affirmatively with her head and he asked: "Do you speak English? She responded "no" by moving her head while the rest of the class answered "No!" but one boy said: "She does, a little." When it was time to check out books, Emilia picked one in Spanish and handed it to Lucia. She told her to take that one, but Lucia left it on the shelf and took a Dr. Seuss book. When they went to the check out table, the library assistant told Lucia that she needed to bring back the book she had at home before checking out a new one. Lucia appeared to understand what the assistant had said and told Emilia, in Spanish, that her book was at the class on her desk. Their teacher approached them and asked Lucia what was going on. Lucia was very shy and said: "I...I,"

The teacher asked: "Do you need to get your book?

"Yes," she answered.

"What do you need to get?"

"Book" Lucia said slowly.

9:37 - 9:58. At the classroom, Lucia and the three other boys worked with the LAP assistant. Each student shared the book s/he had brought back from the library and the others looked at the pictures. Lucia told the instructor that she had selected "Green Eggs and Ham." They both looked at some of the pictures while the teacher asked some questions to see if Lucia knew the content. Sometimes she remained silent, but other times she answered with one or two words. It was just enough to let the assistant know that she had understood the question and knew the answer.

10:05 - 10:38. The group was on the carpet. They were in pairs reading a map from a social-studies book, while the teacher read aloud and asked questions. At their desks, one child read the

directions aloud and the rest had to follow. They were to complete a map on a worksheet by coloring in certain areas with certain colors. Lucia seemed insecure. She looked to the students that were working around her, and finally she took the right color of crayon and completed the task correctly.

DAY FOUR

8:40 - 8:56. Lucia and Emilia were listening to an English story on tape. They shared the same book. Lucia saw a flag on the book and said in Spanish that it was very pretty and that it looked like the Mexican flag. Emilia nodded and Lucia added, this time in English, "I like Mexico."

9:38 - 9:55. At the LAP program, Lucia and the other three boys had to write a story about dragons in their notebooks. It had to be at least two sentences long and had to have a picture. Lucia wrote: "The dragons are big. He is name Tam. He is mai frend." She read it to the instructor and told her that she wanted to write, "Another thing on here." The instructor indicated that it had to be another day, because she had to leave.

10:00 - 10:40. The whole class was on the carpet reviewing mapping and symbols. A boy helped Lucia to find the page. One student read aloud and the rest followed silently. Lucia looked at the pictures. Emilia raised her hand and added one comment. Lucia, surprised, asked her in Spanish what she just said. Emilia answered using both languages, switching from one to the other.

DAY FIVE

8:37 - 8:53. It was Silent Reading time. Lucia and Emilia shared the table with another girl. All of them read individually. Lucia read in English following the writing with her finger and sounding the words aloud. She asked the other girl to sound a word for her three times.

9:35 - 9:55. Lucia and Emilia were playing on the playground pretending they were in an ocean and the sharks were going to get them. They interacted in Spanish, but when they talked about Disney characters, they named them in English. The commands during the game such as "Hurry", or "Move!" were also said in English.

10:04 - 10:27. The students had to write individually an Easter story. Lucia did not know how to start. The boy seated next to her also spoke Spanish and she asked him what he was going to write. He read his first sentence to her in English. Lucia thought for a while and then she started to sound out the words she wanted to write. She did it letter by letter. For example she said "Bunny" and then repeated "Ba, ba, B!" and wrote the letter down. In two opportunities, she looked at the researcher, who also speaks Spanish and asked for her approval. The boy next to her helped her often, and answered her questions when she requested it. He answered using both languages, sometimes switching from one to the other. He said, for example, "Escribe una H on the house. Casa se escribe with H" (Write an H on the house. House has an H on it). She read her story to the teacher in English. There was only one word she could not pronounced. The word was "going" but the "g" was difficult to recognized, until the teacher found another "g" on the story and realized that it was Lucia's way to reproduced that letter. The teacher told Lucia she was very proud of her.

10:40 - 11:05. The students formed four different groups on the carpet, and the teacher gave each group many different manipulatives to create quilt patterns individually. Lucia and Emilia were working side by side. Lucia did not know exactly what to do or how to start, so she observed for a while then began copying the one Emilia was making. But a few minutes later, she got very involved and forgot about Emilia's. By the end, they had created very different ones.

DAY SIX

8:20 - 8:56. There was a substitute teacher in the classroom. She passed out worksheets with questions about a story she had read. She called up different students to respond orally first, then she wrote the answers on the board and the students copied them onto the worksheets. Lucia did not seemed to know what they were really supposed to do. She was copying from the board and when she ran out of the space provided for the first answer, she used the one provided for the second one and so on. She did not break up words, and she even reduced the size of her handwriting to be able to write a whole word in the same line. Emilia went to see what was she doing and told her that it was wrong and Lucia answered: "I know, pero yo no entendi the story anyway" (I know but I did not understand the story anyway).

9:04 - 9:32. At the Library, the librarian read a book about a bat and then he explained how they were going to create their own bats. He passed out the elements and showed them how to cut and fold the paper to create the bat. Lucia followed every step, even helped Emilia (in Spanish) at one point, and made a very nice one.

9:38 - 10:00. Lucia checked out "The Little Mermaid" and when she was back in the classroom, she showed it to the LAP instructor. She asked Lucia what she knew about the book and Lucia told her that she liked it, that she had a Spanish version at her house and that she had seen the movie. Then Lucia picked a book from a pile. The instructor told her what it was about and then Lucia read "Eating." It had many repetitions, and when she was stuck, she looked at the pictures and tried to guess the word, or went back a page or two trying to find the same word. In only one occasion, the instructor asked her a question to help her to guess the word. It was, "What color is his banana?" and Lucia immediately realized what the word was. The instructor told her she had done a wonderful job.

DAY SEVEN

8:35 - 8:48. During silent reading Lucia and Emilia were looking at the pictures of a book written in English. They were selecting the characters they liked the most. They were talking in Spanish and suddenly they changed to English and finished their "looking at pictures- selecting characters game" in English. Then Emilia read aloud while Lucia pointed to each word with her finger. She tried to do it before Emilia would pronounced the word, but sometimes she got lost. In these instances Emilia moved Lucia's finger along to the right word. At one point in the story, she asked Emilia, in Spanish, where the word green was in the text. Emilia showed it to her and Lucia read it aloud.

10:20 - 10:50. Everybody had to write a letter to the Australian exchange teacher who was their

first teacher at the beginning of the year. The teacher wrote some ideas on the board. Lucia and Emilia went to work at the desk in the back of the room. They worked individually side by side. Lucia started by copying a question from the board, "How are you?" Then she said aloud what she wanted to write, sounded out the letters and tried to write them down. She asked Emilia how to spell "Easter" and "eggs." She went around the room and watched how other students had closed their letters. Finally she wrote, "From Lucia, Love."

Lucia gave her letter to the teacher who read it, made the corrections with her pen and told Lucia that she had to do the final draft the next day.

## DISCUSSION

The data presented in this study points clearly to acquisition of a second language in a mainstreamed classroom as a complex and challenging process for a seven year old child. Lucia was learning a second language within the school environment while participating in learning the classroom activities. As in the case presented by Romney, et al. (1988), English was learned almost entirely in the context of school. Similarly, as made clear in conversations with Lucia and with her teacher, Lucia's life out of school took place in Spanish. Her mom spoke only Spanish, her father just a little English and her sister, like Lucia, was learning English at the school, but they did not use it at home at all. Consequently, it was difficult for Lucia to function adequately all the time in an English speaking environment.

Considering the three alternatives of Bilingual Education presented by Krashen (1982), Lucia was in a submersion program. She was in a classroom with native English speakers and did not receive English as a second language instruction. She participated in a Literacy Assistance Program (LAP) at the school. Lucia and three of her classmates received special instruction in reading and writing for half an hour every day from 9:30 to 10:00. They all had different reading and writing skills. The only thing they had in common was their first language.

The differences among these children were many, and the mechanisms they used to acquire their second language were very different. Lucia listened attentively to the stories the instructor read, talked about the books she selected at the library and tried to answer questions the instructor asked her. She seemed enthusiastic to make up stories and read them aloud. Allen (1986) came to similar conclusions when she stated that there is a wide range of differences in the way children learn a second language.

Lucia seemed to enjoy the time she spent with the LAP teacher. She liked to be read to and usually participated with comments or ideas, especially if she knew the content of the story. She was motivated to write stories and talk about them. This feature is in accordance with the findings on the study of children from four different nationalities (Goodman & Goodman, 1978).

Romney et al. (1988) stated that children learning a second language are at a disadvantage when it comes to reading. Lucia did not seemed to enjoy the books she could read, so she usually chose more interesting ones (at the library or during silent reading time). She tried to discover their meaning, or

asked her instructor or a friend to read them to her.

Heath (1983) pointed out that minority students bring to school their language background. Lucia could read and write fluently in Spanish when she started her American schooling. What she brought were different language uses and cultural norms, and was transferring them to the second language she was learning. The role of her first language was very important in making input comprehensible because the knowledge she acquired while interacting in Spanish with her peers played an important role in her understanding of the second language. Similarly, Cummins (1984) and Krashen (1981) found that acquisition of a second language depended on access to comprehensible input that made communication meaningful. The use of Spanish allowed Lucia to participate more freely in conversations, to be sure she knew what was going on and to communicate with her friends. Krashen and Terrell (1983) arrived to a similar conclusion when they stated that the use of the first language allowed performers to show competence and to meet a need of communication.

Lucia's bilingual peers used code-switching frequently when talking to Lucia. Rong and Butler, (1989) demonstrated that code-switching was intentional, and in this classroom it was observed that the students switched from one language to the other depending on the reactions of the person who was listening. For example the boy who helped Lucia to write the Easter story, looked at her when he was talking and if Lucia did not answer or started writing on her paper, he repeated what he had just said using, this time, more words in Spanish.

Code-switching also had a social function, such as the examples cited by Wonder (1987). Her peers wanted to create a communication bridge with Lucia. She used this technique on occasions to ask a question or make a short comment. Falties (1989) showed that second language learners were limited in the use of code-switching, which also happened to Lucia. She did not have enough skills in English to produce constructions that would allow her to code-switch to any functional degree at this point. However, she was in a rapid state of acquiring these skills to code-switch more effectively.

Research showed that learners starting with different conversational skills in a second language often reached good levels in about two years of exposure to English (Cummins, 1984; Fillmore, 1983). This was Lucia's third year at Ivan K. Pravda Elementary School and she could not communicate orally in English. There are important factors to consider at this point that can account for this. First, Lucia was required to use her English skills only in academic learning situations when she had to work by herself (for example, when writing a story). Even in those situations she could get help from Emilia or other bilingual students. In reality, then, she did not really need English that much to complete the work.

Second, her motivation to learn English and become proficient in this language was context specific. Lucia was very involved and eager to participate in English during the LAP time where she felt comfortable and more secure. First of all, it was a small group of children. Next, she seemed more relaxed talking in English during this time than when she had to talked to her teacher. The teacher was careful to listen and to praised even if Lucia made a mistake. These observations coincide with

Macaulay's (1980) when he argued that when acquiring a second language the learner's motivation or lack of it would have a crucial effect on his/her progress.

Third, she did not seem interested in socializing with her English speaking peers. She usually played in Spanish and was eager to communicate with children who spoke that language. Considering Fillmore's study (1976), the Mexican children who made major progress in acquiring English were those who were strongly interested in making friends with English speaking children. These classroom observations showed that Lucia was not particularly interested in her American classmates.

Lucia spent most of her time with Emilia and freely used her first language whenever she needed it. Netten and Spain (1989), discussed how children created different learning environments within the same classroom. At Lucia's class it was easy to observe that the two girls created their own private "world" within the bigger one that was formed by the rest of the class. On the other hand Lucia enjoyed working with other bilingual students. She would rather work in pairs or in small groups than by herself. As Cummins (1989) has shown, minority students are more motivated to learn in cooperative classrooms where students can help one another and interact freely.

## CONCLUSION

Acquisition of a second language for Lucia was a multifarious process in which socialization played a major role. The use of her first language allowed Lucia to transfer her knowledge and background to the new learning experiences. It also made it easier for her to communicate, to create friendly relationships and to receive comprehensible input for understanding what was happening. This facilitated her ability to perform in accordance with the academic and the social expectations.

The one-on-one assistance that she received daily with reading and writing helped her to open up and participate in a small group using English. Her learning of the second language was being accomplished slowly and with relative ease, without external pressures or demands from the group or from the teacher. Lucia was learning English at her own pace and time while participating in regular classroom learning activities.

The study implies that Lucia's experiences are significant for educators and other children like her who are caught in the flow of new immigrants from Mexico. Shortages in funding and personnel necessarily impinge on the quality of education that children such as Lucia receive. This study is significant because it showed how the pedagogy of the teacher effectively facilitated Lucia's second language acquisition and allowed her to use her inherent drive to communicate. This study can benefit other children like Lucia and those who intersect her experiences by suggesting revisions to language policies and instructional paradigms that promote second language learning and literacy of children from minority cultures.

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